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POETRY AND THE WAR

In the beginning and through to the present it is poetry and not prose that has recorded the soul-stirring events in the life of the individual and the tribe and the nation. Because it lacks the rhythmic movement suggestive of emotional excitement and because it is primarily the medium of every-day intercourse, prose cannot express such intense feeling as can poetry. Persons without poetic gifts show their sense of the superiority of the older form by dropping into verse when they wish to be particularly effective in the expression of their emotions. This was illustrated recently in the case of a young man named Raymond, who was leaving his native town for one of the cantonments. Before his departure his friends presented him with a purse accompanied by a farewell letter, in which they wished him good luck and begged him to write to them. All this in matter-of-fact prose. But when the writer of the letter came to the heart of the message, the voicing of the sentiments of his fellows, he felt impelled to resort to verse:—

So long, Ray, our old friend,
We will soon be with you to the end;
But we hope before over there you roam,
That we will see you safe at home.

Now this is not poetry; it is not even free verse. But the writer thought it was a more emotional utterance than was possible in plain prose, and he doubtless labored over it with all the infinite pains that go according to some definitions to make up a work of genius. And I have no doubt that the aforesaid Raymond appreciated the poetical effort as much as he did the financial accompaniment.

This being so, and poetry being the natural expression of emotional excitement, we should expect a great mass of poetry as a result of the tremendous events of this war. And we know that thousands of poems have been written. Several anthologies have been collected and not a day passes on which new poems are not appearing in great numbers. But is it real poetry or only rhyming lines like those inscribed above? Mr. John Mase-

field, probably our greatest living poet, said recently that no literature was being produced to-day; that there had been neither time nor opportunity for the slow ripening of reflection on experience which is necessary for the production of literature. He would say, doubtless, that great poetry cannot be produced in the heat of the conflict, that the poet's feelings are so torn by the agony of the strife that he cannot think of them calmly or deeply, and still less can he put them into poetic speech. When one is in a rage or is overwrought by passion of any kind, one is usually inarticulate or is reduced to meaningless and promiscuous profanity. It is always later that one thinks of the scathing retort; it is only when the mind has resumed its calm that a man can convey in poetic words any idea of the feelings that were surging in his breast. The peace of mind and serenity of soul that enable the poet to hear amid the conflicting tumults of the world the still, sad music of humanity are not possible while he is an active agent in the midst of them. He cannot write poetry, one would suppose, while his ears are assailed by the roar of the guns and the groans of the dying. And yet, as a matter of fact, very excellent poetry has been written not only by men and women at home but also by soldiers actually in the front lines. How can this be?

There are several reasons. In the first place, calm reflection is not entirely dependent upon time and place. Just as Bairnsfather has drawn some of the funniest cartoons of the war from the very midst of the fighting, so many a poet has reflected calmly upon certain aspects and incidents of the war with the shells eternally screaming overhead. The soldier at the front is often more composed than his dear ones at home. Again, the poets have not attempted to envisage the whole conflict, to write, as it were, its Iliad. To do so would be as impossible a hundred years hence as now. No one has ever attempted to put into verse the record of the Napoleonic wars or our Civil War. The siege of Troy was a mere outpost affair compared with this war, even if it did last ten years, and it took twenty-four books for its narration. The poets have concerned themselves with what one might call their own individual sectors of the front, with what they themselves are personally interested in or what comes under their

own observation. It is some striking incident, some grim episode, some touching or appalling situation, some heroic action, some splendid sacrifice, something that never got into the dispatches or something that did,—it is such matters that have been transmuted into poetry. These incidents or situations have made an immediate appeal to the emotions of the poets and did not need the calm reflection of years in order that they might find expression in literature.

Another reason for the excellence of the poetry of this war lies in the fact that it is inspired by a great moral idea. Never before in the history of the world have the spiritual issues of a great conflict been so perfectly clear. The war of the Revolution and the Civil War, though essentially struggles for moral principles, did not so vividly and concretely present the issue as this fight against organized murder. The national sense of justice may be mightily stirred by the imposition of iniquitous taxes or the doctrine of State rights or the institution of human slavery, but it is not so profoundly moved as by the wanton slaughter of innocent men, women, and children, or by a system of destruction in violation of all the laws of God and man. Such recent wars as the Boer and the Spanish-American can hardly be said to have been moral conflicts to the extent of arousing a nation to a white heat in a holy cause. There were a great many people in England who had grave doubts as to the justice of taking up arms against the Boers, and others who condemned it as an absolute wrong. There were some Americans who questioned the conduct of the United States in declaring war on Spain, and the great mass of Americans looked upon the whole affair as a sort of punitive expedition to teach the Spaniards to remember the *Maine*. And neither nation produced any verse of a high order in celebration of its war or any of its incidents. The battle hymn of the Republic in the Spanish war seems to have been "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," and it about reflects the seriousness of the average citizen on that occasion. But in the present fight, from the day that Belgium was invaded, there has been a clear vision of the horror of that deed and all that it connotes, as well as an insistent demand that Germany be punished for her outrageous

crime. The progress of the struggle has but drawn more sharply the lines between the forces of evil as operative in Teutonic frightfulness and those of righteousness as embodied in the great democracies of the world. The voice of the poet is the voice of the national conscience after centuries of political freedom and moral enlightenment. It is actually the voice of God.

This poetry is therefore the product of the time and responds to the instincts and aspirations of the English and American peoples. It is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions, which have been born of the multitudinous experiences of this war. It covers a wide range of subjects, from the emotion inspired by the deed or the fact to a different conception of the meaning of life, death, and immortality than appears in the older poetry. It seldom tries to penetrate the mystery why this war should be,—that truly calls for the slow ripening of reflection on experience,—but it does seek to show how man responds to the awful fact of the war. It would reveal the soul in the face of the greatest catastrophe that has ever visited this earth. This being so, it is perhaps worth while to study this poetry to see wherein it is of a kind with earlier verse and wherein it strives to express things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

There are a goodly number of poems celebrating the heroic deed, poems that hold their own beside Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade," and that record valor in battle against tremendous odds. Such is Wilfred Campbell's "Langemarck at Ypres," in which he tells in spirited verse of the resistance the Canadians made against the first gas attack of the Huns:—

Ringed round, hemmed in, and back to back
They fought there under the dark,
And won for Empire, God, and Right,
At grim, red Langemarck.

Or we have Herbert Kaufman's "The Hell-Gate at Soissons," which puts into the mouth of Darino, the poet of the *Comédie Française*, the story of the twelve Englishmen who died one after the other in their effort to blow up a bridge, only the twelfth succeeding just before he was shot down. The relief of the

Twenty-first by the Guards, Conan Doyle tells in excellent verse.
The men were hard pressed,—

Fighting alone, worn to the bone,
But sticking it—sticking it yet.

No hope was in sight and death was all about them, when the
Guards appeared. How they cheered them! and the Guards
had—

A trifle of swank and dash,
Cool as a home parade,
Twinkle and glitter and flash,
Flinching never a shade,
With the shrapnel right in their face
Doing their Hyde Park stunt,
Keeping their swing at an easy pace,
Arms at the trail, eyes front!
Man, it was great to see!
Man, it was fine to do!
It's a cot and a hospital ward for me,
But I'll tell 'em in Blighty, wherever I be,
How the Guards came through.

These poems suggest many in earlier periods of our literature, Macaulay's "Horatius," Tennyson's "Revenge," Drayton's "Agincourt," speeches in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, and in sheer admiration for glorious deeds they do not differ essentially from what has already been done. It is, however, significant that whereas such poems are the characteristic product of former wars, they are not so of this war. Now it is the cause rather than the event, the moral rather than the romantic and heroic aspects of the struggle that stir the imagination of the modern poet. The romance of the old wars has gone with them. No more do we think with Othello of—

. . . . the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!

It has all vanished before the armed motors, the "tanks," and the grim business of the trenches. Even the ships, which have been the glory of English wars and the inspiration of English verse, have now, after the first few weeks of accounting for the German navy, settled down to the unromantic task of keeping

the enemy under his land fortifications. It is not the battle that is celebrated in the poems on the navy, but the wearisome keeping watch through the long, dark, stormy nights, and there is very little of the old glory in that. And it is not the flagship and her splendid train that figure in these poems, but the destroyers, the trawlers, the merchantmen,—grim shapes moving about swiftly and invisibly. Here we have none of the fighting *Temeraire* that Newbolt sang, but the hazardous inconspicuous work of the merchantman's captain,—

A rough job or a tough job—he's handled two or three—
And what or where he won't much care, nor ask what the risk may be. . . .
For a tight place is the right place when it's wild weather at sea.
—(C. Fox Smith's "British Merchant Service.")

Or it is the prosaic work of the mine-sweepers who have to dispose of "mines located in the fairway,"—and they do; or of the unoffending but very necessary merchantman, the poor old hooker, that may meet destruction any moment, not the romantic ship with sails full set that earlier poets sang about:—

When the waters known of old
Death in dreadful shape may hold. . . .
When the mine's black treachery
Secret walks the insulted sea. . . .
(Lest the people wait in vain
For their cattle and their grain),
Since Thy name is mercy, then,
Lord, be kind to merchantmen!
—(C. Fox Smith's "War Risks.")

It is significant that when the romantic touch is given, Admiral Drake and other old heroes are summoned to watch with the fleets through the long, dark night:—

Oh, seamen of old, the shadowy gates
Swing wide to let you through,
And out o'er the seas your galleons sweep
To fight for the flag anew.
(M. G. Meugen's "The Fleets.")

The most striking poem dealing with the ships and the most romantic is Joyce Kilmer's "The White Ships and the Red," which treats of the crime of the *Lusitania*. She goes to the

bottom all in red to join all the other dead ships, which are in white,—

... the ships of sorrow
Who spend the weary night,
Until the dawn of Judgment Day,
Obscure and still and white.

But she went to the bottom as witness to a loathly deed, "a deed without a name," by a blow that was aimed in hell:—

When God's great voice assembles
The fleet on Judgment Day,
The ghosts of ruined ships will rise
In sea and strait and bay.
Though they have lain for ages
Beneath the changeless flood,
They shall be white as silver.
But one—shall be like blood.

Instead of the romance of the shock of battle glorified in the older poetry there is now the grim, hideous carnage from shrapnel and high explosives and the dull, dirty, tiresome work in the trenches. This is something we get in no other war poetry. The verse describing No Man's Land is as different from earlier war verse as the physical conditions are different. The peculiar horror of that space of forbidden ground has been described vividly in prose and verse:—

No spoken word, no gifted pen or brush
Of painter using pigments mixed in Hell,
May e'er depict the horror and the hush
That lie there when the guns have ceased their yell.
—(W. Stonehold's "No Man's Land.")

And we have poems telling of the lacerated bodies of the still living soldiers:—

There he lies now, like a ghoulish score of him,
Left on the field for dead:
The ground all around is smeared with the gore of him—
Even the leaves are red.
The Thing that was Billy lies a-dying there,
Writhing and a-twisting and a-crying there;
A sickening sun grins down on him—
Billy, the Soldier Boy!
—(R. C. Mitchell's "He Went for a Soldier.")

Or we get the mad raving of the soldier suffering from shell shock:—

Neck-deep in mud
He mowed and raved—
He who had braved
The field of blood—

And as a lad
Just out of school
Yelled: "April fool!"
And laughed like mad.

—(W. W. Gibson's "Mad.")

Or the agony of the man "shattered beyond repair" who is caught in the wire and gets relief by means of his own pistol (Service's "On the Wire"). Or the grim tragedy is made more awful by the contrast of a comedy that is more tragic than tragedy:—

That was his sort.
It didn't matter
What we were at
But he must chatter
Of this and that
His little son
Had said and done:
Till, as he told
The fiftieth time
Without a change
How three-year-old
Prattled a rhyme,
They got the range
And cut him short.

—(W. W. Gibson's "The Father.")

Is it any wonder that the poets feel like exclaiming with Hermann Hagedorn, who in "The Pyres" tells of their gathering the dead bodies to be burned and then exclaims,—

Look! How the sparks take flight!
Stars, stars, make room!
Smoke that was bone and blood!
Hark! the deep roar.
It is the souls telling God
The Glory of WAR!

War is no longer romance; rather it is as Alter Brody calls it in "I Am War" "a pestilence sweeping the world," "a madness riding the necks of men," the death of joy and the joy of death.

And yet it is rather curious that no really first-class poems have been written about the guns or the airplanes or other distinctively modern implements of warfare that do appeal to the imagination. The prose-writers have done greater justice to them and in such fashion as really to invest them in a certain glamor. Philip Gibbs, in the *New York Times* (February 22, 1918), has the following sentences in the course of a cable dispatch, which have more suggestive value than any of the poems I have run across on this subject:—

Behind them and much farther away were the guns which have no human nature, but which in this war seem to the infantry like powers that belong to the spirit of evil, blind in their destruction, careless in their choice of victims, ruthless as the old devil gods of the world's first darkness.

It has remained for the writers of prose also to give some idea of the romance of the air. James Norman Hall's articles in the *Atlantic* on the high adventure of aviation have done more to give the spirit of that branch of the service than all the poems I have seen. The poets do not seem to be able to conceive of the airplane as a thing in itself, to enter at all into its peculiar being. They present it as a bird and in so doing they view it from the ground; they do not soar aloft in the machine. The sensation has to be caught from actual experience, perhaps, before it can be imaginatively rendered; few aviators are poets, and few poets have made flights. It is a new subject for artistic treatment and it is not to be comprehended and rendered into poetry by an observer 10,000 feet below. Perhaps the poets will be able to enter into the feelings of the aviators after these romantic adventurers have given the world a full knowledge of their experiences. There is need not only of the slow ripening of reflection on experience but of the actual experience upon which experience may ripen.

But more characteristic and distinctive of this verse as compared with earlier war poetry is its high moral seriousness. England has awakened to the meaning of the conflict; her soul has been purged as she realizes that she is fighting not merely for her very life but for the spiritual salvation of the world. Never before has the fight for civilization been on such a

stupendous scale. The petty concerns of the past sink into their proper insignificance before this terrible danger and this awful responsibility:—

The cares we hugged drop out of vision;
Our hearts with deeper thoughts dilate.
We step from days of sour division
Into the grandeur of our fate.

There has been a recalling to the heritage of freedom, "which force can neither quell nor cage"; and a cry to endure goes up from the spirit of quickened England:—

Endure, O Earth! and thou, awaken,
Purged by this dreadful winnowing-fan,
O wronged, untamable, unshaken
Soul of divinely suffering man!
—(Binyon's "The Fourth of August.")

There has been in the past too much sloth, too much intellectual pride, lawless dreams, and cynic art. The captains and the dreamers and the voices that we thought were dead or dumb "arise and call us and we come":—

Therefore a Power above the State,
The unconquerable Power, returns.
The fire, the fire that made her great
Once more upon her altar burns,
Once more, redeemed and healed and whole,
She moves to the Eternal Goal.
—(Noyes's "The Searchlights.")

It is a summons to a religious task, and she enters upon it with the feeling of her great soldiers as they held sacred vigil on the night before the battle:—

Single-hearted, unafraid,
Hither all thy heroes came,
On this altar's steps were laid
Gordon's life and Outram's fame.
England! if thy will be yet
By their great example set,
Here beside thine arms to-night
Pray that God defend the right.
—(Newbolt's "The Vigil.")

There is a spirit of devotion to England and to God as the result of the sacredness of the cause. The splendid youth have

unquestioningly given up all things forever and for aye, which is both the glory and the pain of the country. The beauty and the pathos of the sacrifice of the Oxford boys are brought out very touchingly by Miss Letts in her exquisite "The Spires of Oxford." And the youth in dying pass their task on to their successors as a duty that is more than obedience to orders:—

Take up our quarrel with our foe!
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high!
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

—(John McRae's "In Flanders Fields.")

And notwithstanding the frightful losses of the war the poet can look forward with a sublime confidence that they have not been in vain but that they have brought an actual gain in the spiritual life of the nation:—

They brought us for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love and Pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.
—(Rupert Brooke's "The Dead.")

This war has led to the extinguishing of the old animosities and the creating of new ones. The ancient enmity between England and France has, let us trust, forever vanished; and the century-old antagonism between England and America, notwithstanding the hundred years of peace, has only now given way to an alliance and a friendship based on a common moral consciousness. On the other hand, Germany has won the hostility of the world, which will be a precious possession to her, doubtless, for a very long while. Nations are notoriously slow in forgetting and forgiving wrongs they have suffered, and they both consciously and unconsciously cherish hatred, even though diplomatically all is very friendly and serene.

Admiration for the conduct of France has been expressed in much excellent verse, both English and American. The wonderful resistance to the German onslaught and the magnificence

of the French spirit when the fate of the nation seemed a matter of hours evoked the surprise and the applause of a world all too ignorant of her true worth. She had been regarded as decadent, as wholly incapable of resisting the German arms. Paris with its boulevards was in the eyes of most Englishmen and Americans the whole of France, and it gave no very noble idea of the nation's essential soul. When, therefore, France sprang to arms and stopped the German tide, the whole civilized world awoke to ecstasy its living lyres. So it is that the very name of France has thrilled the Anglo-Saxon people just as it has always thrilled its own people. As Henry Van Dyke says, the name of France is—

A name that calls on the world to share
In the burden of sacrificial strife
Where the cause at stake is the world's free life
And the rule of the people everywhere,—
A name like a vow, a name like a prayer.
I give you *France!*

One has to go back to the enthusiasms of the youthful Wordsworth and Coleridge to find the equivalent of the present rapture for France. In both cases it is the glorious courage and patriotic exaltation of France that have stirred the English and American admiration. Just as Wordsworth felt that—

Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing at the top of the golden hours
And human nature seeming born again,

so to-day Grace Ellery Channing bids us—

Uncover the head and kneel—kneel down,
A monarch passes without a crown,
Let the proud tears fall but the heart beat high :
The Greatest of All is passing by,
On its endless march in the endless Plan :

"*Qui vive?*"

"The Spirit of Man."

O Spirit of Man, pass on! Advance!
And they who lead, who hold the van?
Kneel down!

The Flags of France.

France is the most romantic figure in the war, and she has been very happily made incarnate in the person of Joan of Arc. The

French spirit that in the shock of the Marne rose superior to years of military preparation and mere mechanical efficiency is that of the Maid who saved her nation in the hour of dire need:—

Half artist and half anchorite,
Part siren and part Socrates,
Her face—alluring and yet recondite—
Smiled through her salons and academies.

Lightly she wore her double mask,
Till sudden, at war's kindling spark,
Her inmost self, in shining mail and casque,
Blazed to the world her single soul—Jeanne d'Arc!
—(Percy Mackaye's "France.")

The French can do romantic deeds with a grace that excites the admiration and envy of the world. Fancy the scene recorded in Florence Earle Coates's "Place de la Concorde" as happening in the United States or England! The speaker removed the crêpe that for forty-four years had draped the statue of Strasbourg in the Place de la Concorde:—

The mournful crêpe, gray-worn and old,
Her proudly to disclose,
And with a touch of tender care
That fond emotion speaks,
'Mid tears that none could quite command,
Placed the tricolor in her hand,
And kissed her on both cheeks!

Another incident equally French and equally expressive of our admiration for France is that in Charlotte Holmes Crawford's "Vive la France!" according to which the mother holds up her infant baby to the flag just after she learns that her man is dead, and sobs "*Vive la France!*"

I have found very few poems of high quality dealing with Belgium. It would seem that the horror of the civilized world was so great that it could not yet be adequately expressed in verse. One of the best poems centres its appeal upon the splendidly romantic figure of King Albert of Belgium, as he mourns his beloved country. It is Annie Chartres's "The Broken Rose":—

Albert the good, the brave, the great, thy land
Lies at thy feet, a crushed and morient rose

Trampled and desecrated by thy foes.
 One day a greater Belgium will be born,
 But what of this dead Belgium wracked and torn?
 What of this rose flung out upon the sand? . . .
 Behold! Afar where sky and waters meet
 A white-robed figure walketh on the sea.
 (Peace goes before Him and her face is sweet).
 As once He trod the waves of Galilee
 He comes again—the tumult sinks to rest,
 The stormy waters shine beneath His feet.
 He sees the dead rose lying in the sand,
 And lifts the dead rose in His holy hand
 And lays it at his breast.

O broken rose of Belgium, thou art blest!

It is one of the pleasant facts of this war that England and America have cemented a friendship that only recently has been generally recognized and encouraged. Tennyson and others have looked forward to such a union of hearts and aims, but now the poets of both nations express not only their own private enthusiasms but the aspirations of the great mass of their countrymen. And it is a fine thing that this friendship has its bases in moral conviction rather than in mere commercial or political interests. It is very fitting, too, that the answer to the notorious Lissauer "Hymn of Hate" should be sung by an American, and she a college professor, Miss Helen Gray Cone of Hunter College. England's attitude, properly enough, is that of the Tommies, who shout over the top of the trenches to the Germans, "Sing us something comic, sing us the 'ymn of 'ate.'" This new devotion to a common cause Noyes beautifully utters in his "Princeton, May, 1917," in which he speaks of Washington's heart leaping to know that the two nations have at last been joined in one common holy purpose.

A note frequently struck in these poems, though not a new one, however, for Wordsworth also strikes it in "Peele Castle" and the "Character of the Happy Warrior," is the thought that character is swiftly and splendidly developed as the result of the agony of a great experience, that the warrior who is—

. . . doomed to go in company with Pain,
 And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train,
 Turns his necessity to glorious gain.

And it is not merely those who enter the actual conflict, but also those who are forced to stay at home and only stand and wait. The war brings to sudden fruition the instincts immature and purposes unsure that otherwise would have required a lifetime for development. The potentialities for good are precipitated into fixed character to the amazement of those who have watched youth in its thoughtless immaturity. So a boy revisits his old schoolmaster, who had himself been rejected as unfit, and he shows all unaware what he had become. When he was a pupil, he was weak on Greek, he showed a lack of concentration, he found life one long excuse for laughing. But now after eighteen months of strafing and being strafed he has won the "hard-earned-gift of self-dominion":—

For he had faced the awful King
Of Shadows in that darksome valley,
And scorned the terrors of his sting
In many a perilous storm and sally.
Firm in the faith that never tires
Or thinks that man is God-forsaken,
From war's fierce seven-times-heated fires
He has emerged unseared, unshaken.

—(O. M.'s "Master and Pupil.")

The effect of the high endeavor of those who have fought and died upon those who remain behind we get over and over again, and in this we recall Wordsworth. *Toussaint L' Overture* leaves behind him—

great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

So Gerald C. Sirdet, who was killed in action, writes a fine poem, "To the Dead," in which the beloved in addressing her lover realizes the change that has come over her as the result of his death. She imagines that in death he still walks beside her as he used to in the old, happy, foolish days,—

Only when at last by some cross-road,
Our longer shadows, falling in the grass,
Turn us back homeward, and the setting sun
Shines like a golden glory round your head,
There will be something sudden and strange in you.
Then you will lean and look into my eyes,

And I shall see the bright wound at your side,
 And feel the new blood flowing to my heart,
 And I shall hear you speaking in my ear—
 O not the old forgivable, foolish talk,
 But flames and exultations and desires,
 But hopes, and comprehensions, and resolves,
 But holy, incommunicable things
 That like immortal birds sing in my breast,
 And springing from a fire of sacrifice,
 Beat with bright wings about the throne of God.

Other transformations have been wrought by this war, greater than any other in history, which are due not so much to spiritual as to physical changes. War has revealed much that in the ordinary course of life never had an opportunity for its manifestation. So the clerk in Asquith's "The Volunteer" found in the war his great chance for self-expression:—

Here lies a clerk, who half his life had spent
 Toiling at ledgers in a city grey,
 Thinking that so his days would drift away
 With no lance broken in life's tournament:
 Yet ever twixt the books and his bright eyes
 The gleaming eagles of the legions came,
 And horsemen, charging under phantom skies,
 Went thundering past beneath the oriflamme.

And now those waiting dreams are satisfied;
 From twilight into spacious dawn he went;
 His lance is broken; but he lies content
 With that high hour, in which he lived and died.
 And falling thus he wants no recompense,
 Who found his battle in the last resort;
 Nor needs he any hearse to bear him hence,
 Who goes to join the men of Agincourt.

Here is another soldier upon whom the effect has been very different. He too had been a clerk and is now wounded between the lines. This was different, certainly,—

From selling knots of tape and reels of thread
 And knots of tape and reels of thread and knots
 Of tape and reels of thread and knots of tape,
 Day in, day out, . . . till there seemed no escape
 From everlasting service in a shop.

The change was such that he had without a quiver seen his chum Dick blown to smithereens just as Dick was returning to the trench with a plate of butter:—

Dick, proud as Punch,
Grinning like sin, and holding up the plate—
But he had gone on munching his dry lunch,
Unwinking, till he swallowed the last crumb.
—(W. W. Gibson's "Between the Lines.")

Others again, in contrast to these types, had entered the war without realizing what it all meant or without ever coming to any definite idea later of its actual meaning. The blaring of martial music, pretty girls pelting the men with flowers, stirred the heart of Billy the soldier boy when he marched away, though it was—

Not very clear in the kind young heart of him
What the fuss was about.

And when the full horror was realized in his own experience, it was—

Still not quite clear in the poor wrung heart of him
What the fuss was about,
See where he lies—or the ghastly part of him—
While life is oozing out:
There are loathsome things he sees a-crawling there;
There are hoarse-voiced crows he hears a-calling there;
Eager for the foul feast spread for them—
Billy the Soldier Boy.
—(R. C. Mitchell's "He Went for a Soldier.")

The poems that touch upon religion are terribly sincere. Many of them might have been written in any age, but more are the peculiar outgrowth of our own time brought to sudden fruition by the catastrophe of the war. What one notices particularly is that man's soul is not only lifted up to God but that God is also brought down to the comprehension and love of man. God is given the attributes of Christ. He is a great comforter, a good friend, even a loving messenger. Such a poem as "Her Prayer—for Him" by Egbert Sandford, which ends with this prayer:—

On land or sea,—
Wherever he may be,
God, kiss my man for me,

is significant of the new religious poetry. The war is so terrible that some souls cling to God as to the one support and comfort, and they refuse to treat Him as a remote deity to be approached through the church or a ritual. Formerly, as Henry Newbolt says, we had sought God in a cloudy heaven and passed him by on earth; and it is this conception that is rejected for the idea of God incarnate in His Son. Or we have treated Him too much like a tribal deity, as the Germans do with their "Unser Gott." We have made our God too small, only big enough for ourselves and not for the whole world:—

There was a young man, a good while ago,
Who taught that doctrine. . . but they murdered him
Because he wished to share the Jewish God
With other folk. —(K. W. Baker's "Unser Gott.")

We must return to "the mystic challenge of the Nazarene,"—

The deathless affirmation :—Man in God
And God in man willing the God to be.
—(W. S. Johnson's "Prayer for Peace.")

We must get rid of our old disbeliefs and scoffing sophistries, which seem foolish in the present stress, and pray that God may—

Grant us the single heart once more
That mocks no sacred thing,
The sword of Truth our fathers wore
When thou wert Lord and King.
—(Noyes's "A Prayer in Time of War.")

The supreme sacrifice of Christ is humanized and made a part of the great sacrifices of the war. It is not so much held up as a means by which according to the creed of the church the souls of men may be saved. The agony of Christ in the Garden and on the Cross enables the soldier to bear pain and death and the uttermost of human loss. Even in Everard Owen's "Three Hills" Calvary is so linked with the other hills that the human interest is more prominent than the religious:—

There is a hill in England,
Green fields and a school I know,
Where the balls fly fast in summer,
And the whispering elm-trees grow,
A little hill, a dear hill,
And the playing fields below.

There is a hill in Flanders,
Heaped with a thousand slain,
Where the shells fly night and noontide
And the ghosts that died in vain,—
A little hill, a hard hill
To the souls that died in pain.

There is a hill in Jewry,
Three crosses pierce the sky,
On the midmost He is dying,
To save all those who die,—
A little hill, a kind hill
To souls in jeopardy.

It is significant of the new attitude towards religion that the conventional belief in immortality is almost completely absent from this verse. Immortality consists in the greatness of the work that the fallen have done so that their memory will persist to all eternity:—

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them. . . .

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain ;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

—(Binyon's "For the Fallen.")

"The labor and the love and the thought brought out by this war will not pass out to-night nor turn to nought, for it is embodied in all truth and right" (N. M. H.). Love is a species of immortality, not that there is any expectation of seeing the beloved in heaven, but merely that there is the knowledge that memory will live and that life has not been in vain because "we knew great love" (S. Oswald's "The Dead Soldier"). The conventional comforts of religion with their promise of meeting in heaven mean nothing to the beloved left behind. Such a cry as Browning's—

O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

is not heard here. The faith in the greatness of the cause, in the splendor of the sacrifice, and in the memory of a life that

has reached its climax in days of glorious action is a more enduring consolation than any belief in meeting in heaven. In quite a new and startling sense virtue is its own reward. The consciousness of doing the deed or dying in the attempt creates an immortality for the soldier and for those who suffer personal loss. Even the realization of what all this work means in the mass is in itself a sufficient immortality:—

And far ahead, dim trampling generations,
Who never felt and cannot guess our pain,—
Though history count nothing less than nations,
And fame forget where grass has grown again—
Shall yet remember that the world is free.
It is enough! For this is immortality.—(R. V.)

Love of country in time of war is naturally much more intense than in time of peace. It is a love for which a great price is being paid and it is bound up with all that is dearest in life. It is associated with human objects of affection, as well as with scenes in nature made dear by association. The beauty of hill and dale, of field and flower, is lovelier because it must be given up as long as the struggle endures and perhaps forever. Nature is not loved merely for its own sake, but because it means home and country to the soldier. This beauty, too, is associated with pain in that it presents the inevitable contrast with the havoc of the battle-front. In England it is the soft benediction of September sun; at the front it is tumult and roaring of the incessant gun; and over all are the blue embracing skies (Bourdillon's "Here: and There"). Or it is in England with the cuckoo calling down in her meadows where the cowslip gleams, while at the front it is—

. . . blood and dust and smother,
Screaming of horses, men in agony.
—(N. M. Holland's "April in England.")

Or again it is the half-conscious babbling of the "half-stunned, half-blinded" marcher through the August heat, who repeats over and over again, "All-heal and willow-herb and meadow-sweet" (Gibson's "Retreat"). Again, this love of country is a deep, personal matter, a warm affection, like that in Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier," in which the poet-soldier thinks of

himself as conferring like a high ambassador extra-territorial sovereignty upon the spot where he will lie in death:—

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by her rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Patriotic poetry could no higher go; and it is more spiritual than anything since Wordsworth. It is a patriotism which is akin to immortality.

The humorous poem could not be wanting in any considerable body of English verse, no matter how grim the theme, since the Anglo-Saxon, as distinguished from the Teutonic type, maintains its sense of humor at all times. It is significant that the purely humorous poems have for the most part to do with what happens back of the firing-line. An anonymous poem called "Form Fours" tells of some of the difficulties of drill as experienced by an intelligent recruit, of his getting so muddled under the direction of the sergeant that his feet get hopelessly tangled:—

In my dreams the Sergeant, the Kaiser, and Kipling mix my feet,
Saying, "East is left, and Right is Might, and never the twain
shall meet!"
In my nightmare squad *all* files are odd, and the Fours are aw-
fully queer,
With "a pace to the left with the front foot, and one to the right
with the rear!" —(F. Sidgwick's "Form Fours.")

Then we have an amusing incident told by Henry Newbolt, of a young subaltern, who, while the shells were screeching and scattering past, was out with a rook-rifle to shoot a sparrow for his cat, the cat "anxiously watching his every movement." We

have also the humorous political poems parodied on "Alice in Wonderland," the "Malice in Kulturland" verses:—

The Kaiser and the Chancellor
Were walking hand in hand ;
They wept like anything to see
Such lots of foreign land :
" If this were only Germanized,"
They said, " it *would* be grand !"

" If seven hosts of peaceful Huns
Swept it with fire and sword,
Do you suppose," the Kaiser said,
" Culture could be restored ?"
" I doubt it," said the Chancellor,
And looked a trifle bored.

—(Horace Wyatt's " The Place was Basking in the Sun.")

or—

" You are old, father William," the young man said,
" And the end of your life is in sight ;
Yet you're frequently patting your God on the head—
Do you think at your age it is right ?"

" In my youth," said his sire, " I established my case
As a being apart and divine ;
And I think if I try to keep God in His place,
He ought to support me in mine."

When, however, the humor gets near the tragedy of the war, it takes on a sardonic cast. So R. B. Glaenzer writes on Everykid's expression, " What fun to be a soldier," with apparent playfulness till it reaches the bitter irony of the last stanza:—

God, it's fun to be a soldier ! Oh it's fun, fun, fun,
To lie out still and easy when your day's sport's done ;
With not a thing to worry for, nor anything to hurry for ;
Not hungry, thirsty, tired, but a hero much admired,
Just dead, dead, dead, like Jack and Bill and Fred !
Fun ?—Sure it's fun, just the finest ever, son !

While in many respects these poems are expressive of the ideals and aspirations of England and America through the centuries, they are also the voice of much that has been struggling to reach the surface during recent years. Just as the war brought out the devotion of Belgium, the heroism of France, the barbarism of Germany, it has also revealed the moral fortitude of England and the idealism of America. If old religious be-

liefs are changed and changing, there has been no lessening of the moral strength of either nation. Holiness and truth and love are dearer, more precious for the struggle the nations are going through to preserve them. There is no need of future rewards, of the blessed immortality of the creeds, to urge men and women on to the performance of duty, the burden of which has not been equalled in the history of the race; and the burden is accepted, not with patient resignation as of a dumb beast, but with a readiness that knows no faltering, an exaltation that knows no doubt, and a determination that knows no end but victory. Such being the spirit of this poetry, and therefore of all the English-speaking nations, can we question that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?

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